

El Día de Los Muertos

Halloween is not celebrated in Mexico. However, the next two days of November 1 and November 2 are important holidays. The Mexicans celebrate All Saints' Day on November 1 and All Souls' Day on November 2. These holidays are known throughout Mexico as "El Día de Los Muertos," The day of the Dead.

The Mexican people believe that on these days, the spirits of the dead return to earth to be fed. This belief dates back to the traditions of the ancient Indians of Mexico. All over Mexico, families expect visits from the spirits of their dead ones and receive them as honored guests. The family prepares a special altar on a table, and all of the favorite dishes of the dead family members are placed there. The altar is always adorned with yellow marigolds or calendulas which are the traditional flowers of the dead. A decorated candle for each dead soul is placed to the rear of the table. A picture of the dead person is usually put in front of the candle.

All Saints' Day, November 1, is the day that the souls of the little departed children return to their homes. The Mexicans believe that all little children who have died have become angels, so there is no need for sadness. Some special dish of food and a toy are put on the sacred altar for the children. They are usually expected at night, and parents often shoot off firecrackers outside to attract their attention to the house so that they will be sure to find it.

November 2, All Souls' Day, is a national holiday. This is the day that the adult souls return to their homes. Cemeteries are visited all day long. Some people bring flowers or huge floral decorations and candles with which they decorate the graves; then they return home. Others spend the entire day at the graves. They bring picnic lunches and make a social event of the occasion. Outside of the cemeteries are booths which sell food, drinks and flowers.